Subject: Chat with Jonathan Farley
From: Jonathan Farley <lattice.theory@gmail.com>
To: barriticus@gmail.com

me: hey
me: finishing up the chapter right now
me: need to check a couple things with you
me: Gee did indeed write in his book that he had security defend his office for a day after receiving a death threat, correct?
Jonathan: Yes. You can find the chapter at this next link
Jonathan: http://www.latticetheory.net/media/pdf/Gee_Chapter_2.pdf
Jonathan: See p. 15.
Jonathan: There is also this January 2003 article from "The Tennessean" newspaper:
Jonathan: Tennessean, The (Nashville, TN)

Tennessean, The (Nashville, TN)

January 17, 2003

Dorm name change led to threats to VU

Author: MICHAEL CASS
Section: Main News
Page: 1A

Article Text:

Caller vows to cut out Gee's heart, school reports

By MICHAEL CASS

Staff Writer

One person called Vanderbilt University's chancellor and threatened to "cut (his) heart out" another e-mailed a university spokeswoman to threaten an event involving former Vice President Al Gore. Both threats came after the school decided to remove the word "Confederate" from a building's name, Vanderbilt says in court documents.

Vanderbilt attorneys attached copies of e-mail messages, a campus police report and a police official's affidavit to a memorandum filed in Davidson County Chancery Court late Wednesday afternoon. They included the items to counter the United Daughters of the Confederacy's claim that the university had shown no specific examples of threats to Vanderbilt personnel when it asked the court to seal documents related to the decision.
Jonathan: Attorneys for the two sides will debate that request before Davidson County Chancellor Irvin Kilcrease at 9 a.m. today.

The UDC's Tennessee division sued Vanderbilt in October over its plans to change the name of Confederate

Memorial Hall, a dormitory that the organization helped build with a $50,000 donation nearly 70 years ago. On Jan. 3, Vanderbilt asked the court to keep confidential any documents revealing the names of administrators, trustees and other people involved in the decision.

After the UDC responded last week, Vanderbilt offered a much longer argument in support of its position, claiming that the lawsuit "concerns matters .... of little legitimate public interest (the changing of the name of a dormitory on a private university's campus)."

"First of all, it should be clear that there is no 'public right to know' regarding factual information relevant to this case," the Wednesday filing states. "Vanderbilt University is a private, not-for-profit institution. Despite its prominence in the Nashville community, Vanderbilt has ... no legal obligation to disclose or report to the public any of its decision-making processes."

The attached police report, listing Vanderbilt Chancellor Gordon Gee as the victim, says Gee returned a call from Wallace Earl Cook of 1437 Nesbitt Drive in Madison on Jan. 7. "After Gee explained the reason for the name change, subject Cook stated that he was through talking and was going to come over to Vanderbilt to cut Gee's heart out," says the report, filed later that day.
Jonathan: Charles V. Smith, Vanderbilt's assistant chief of police, says in the affidavit that "VUPD investigated Cook and learned that he is a retired military service member. No criminal record on him could be located. VUPD continues to provide increased security for the Chancellor, (administration building) Kirkland Hall and other locations as a result of this incident."

Cook could not be reached for comment yesterday.

One of the e-mail messages, addressed to a Vanderbilt spokeswoman and sent by a Jean Stork on Oct. 18, contains the subject line "Removal of 'Confederate' from building 'bad' ... Gore address 'worse.' "

"Shame on you all," the message reads in part. "We only hope you have plenty of security around for this distastfull event .... As we fear you will need it."

Gore and his wife, Tipper, spoke at Vanderbilt's annual Family Re-Union conference on Oct. 21. Smith's affidavit says a VUPD detective determined that the message had come from out of state and that there were no problems during the conference.
Jonathan: Other e-mails contain a mix of racial slurs, criticisms of Gee, a reference to the university as "Panderguilt" and other insults. One, from a Henry Maston, expresses the hope that Gee will be "killed by the same worthless (racial slur) that kills Farley."

Jonathan Farley, an assistant math professor at Vanderbilt, wrote in a column published in The Tennessean in November that Confederate soldiers and leaders should have been executed at the end of the Civil War. In a related matter, Vanderbilt and UDC attorneys are arguing over whether the UDC needs to depose, or interview, Farley, who will begin a visiting professorship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology this month.

According to Smith's affidavit, two Davidson County assistant district attorneys told a VUPD detective that "there were no specific threats that warranted prosecution" in Maston's message.
Jonathan: END OF ARTICLE
Jonathan: I heard through the grapevine that Richard McCarty also received a threat.

Jonathan: The email address of the reporter should be:
Jonathan: "Michael Cass" <mcass@tennessean.com>,
Jonathan: In my email to Robert Stacy McCain, I included the threatening email that Nia Toomer received. She was the president of Vanderbilt's Black Student Alliance in 2002-2003. Before that message, she was leading demonstrations. After that, she stopped doing anything at all.
Jonathan: She was specifically targeted by Tim Chavez, the Tennessean columnist Robert Stacy McCain lifted the quotes from (whom I believe he was actively working with).
Jonathan: I should put "quotes" in quotation marks.
Jonathan: The essay Gee refers to actually criticized me, but did not in any way criticize anyone else (for example, the neo-Confederates).
Jonathan: It goes without saying that I don't vouch for anything in Gee's essays or even the Tennessean.
Jonathan: For example, Gee in the book chapter expresses surprise that I had accepted a position at MIT: Obviously I had been planning a leave of absence with Vanderbilt for months. The position was offered in the summer of 2002 and the chairman, dean, etc. all new about it.
Jonathan: knew
me: the MIT thing - you had notified them in advance that you were to take the position, contrary to Gee's book in which he says he was surprised about this, correct?
Jonathan: Yes.
Jonathan: Some neo-Confederates even wrote that GEE had arranged the position for me, to get me out of there!
Jonathan: My having the position at MIT had no bearing whatsoever on my essay.
Jonathan: Although now I'm glad I had it, so I could escape.
Jonathan: Ironically, Gee promised Brown University that that would be his last presidency.
Jonathan: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ601770&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ601770
Jonathan: But he left Brown after a year and a half or so.
Jonathan: His successor, Ruth Simmons, was black: I think the first black person to head an Ivy League university.
Jonathan: And Brown looked into its connections with slavery.
Jonathan: http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/
Jonathan: (Something Obama would be too afraid to do.)
Jonathan: So Gee should talk about leaving an institution precipitously.
me: you didn't end up at MIT, right?
me: and you never received tenure at Vanderbilt?
Jonathan: I was a Martin Luther King Visiting Associate Professor of Applied Mathematics at MIT for the calendar years 2003 and 2004.
Jonathan: I did get tenure at Vandebilt.
me: during your leave of absence, you were in JAmaica?
Jonathan: In the summer of 2003.
Jonathan: No, I had accepted a position at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica in late 2004.
Jonathan: http://www.latticetheory.net/media/pdf/uwi.pdf
Jonathan: (But I wanted the wording of the contract changed slightly.)
Jonathan: In the spring of 2003, Dean of Harvard College Benedict Gross had told me at the Harvard Faculty Club he would invite me as a visiting professor.
Jonathan: Unfortunately, he didn't. I only got an appointment as a Visiting Scholar.
me: Gee was Chancellor at the time of the incident?
Jonathan: Since Jamaica had not sorted out my contract by the time I was due to finish at MIT (December

2004), and MIT, despite its rhetoric about wanting minorities, did not offer to extend my position,
me: and McCarty was provost?
Jonathan: I thought of returning to Vanderbilt for one semester.
Jonathan: Gee was still chancellor at this time and McCarty was dean. I forget who was provost.
Jonathan: But then I found out the neo-Confederate case was being revived, to re-start either the day I was to return to Vanderbilt or that week. (Vanderbilt knew the day I was to return.)
Jonathan: So that's why I asked Vanderbilt to extend my unpaid leave of absence.
Jonathan: Then I got the letter you have from McCarty.
Jonathan: This is the important point:
Jonathan: I don't want anyone to be able to say I was sanctioned by Vanderbilt,
Jonathan: so I contend that I left Vanderbilt *before* McCarty's letter.
Jonathan: But as it happens I question the validity of McCarty's actions in that letter: he unilaterally, without any chance of appeal, tries to sanction me for not wanting
Jonathan: my life to be threatened and to be libeled again.
Jonathan: Jamaica never did amend my contract, so I took a one-year position at Stanford for 2005-2006, and then went to Jamaica in the fall of 2006.
Jonathan: Which didn't work out, because I should have made them fix the contract after all.
Jonathan: The headline of the article I am emailing you says it all.
Jonathan: So I did get tenure. I left solely because I wanted to avoid the death threats, the libel, and whatever might happen to me at the hands of a Klan-supporting judge. I leave it to reporters to confirm if Vanderbilt had cut a deal with the neo-Confederate Klan supporters to deliver Farley to them in order to be left alone.
Jonathan: Vanderbilt had an eminently winnable case, and they threw in the towel.
Jonathan: So this is not the typical case of a disgruntled ex-employee: I had a permanent job at Vanderbilt, but left Vanderbilt because of the racist death threats and other, more serious forms of intimidation.
Jonathan: Jamaica is a black country and they never explained why they went from offering to make me chairman and then reneging on their written agreement; however, it could be that they didn't know about the Vanderbilt situation when they offered me the job, and when they found out about it, were no longer happy with me. This is speculation.
Jonathan: So the Vanderbilt story could have affected me even there.
Jonathan: At Caltech I received emails like this:
Jonathan: from
"anonymous_student@math.caltech.edu" <anonymous_student@math.caltech.edu> hide details Nov 11 (4 days ago)
reply-to
anonymous_student@math.caltech.edu
to
lattice@caltech.edu
date Nov 11, 2007 6:52 PM
subject Ma 6a (Fall 2007-08)
mailed-by its.caltech.edu
Remote host: (131.215.135.145)
Browser: Mozilla/5.0 (Macintosh; U; Intel Mac OS X; en) AppleWebKit/419.3 (KHTML, like Gecko) Safari/419.3

Name:
E-Mail: anonymous_student@math.caltech.edu
Major: Mathematics

Position: Undergrad

Could you please spend more time preparing lectures for your students and less time on writing articles expounding on racism in the United States? Many of us find your course very confusing...
Jonathan: ***So the Vanderbilt case affected me even there.
me: how long was the leave of absence they gave you?
Jonathan: It was for 2 years---the time period of my visiting position at MIT.
Jonathan: There were erroneous reports that it was for 1 year, and I noted around December 2003 there were newspaper articles about how the neo-Confederate case was starting up again---but then of course died down.
Jonathan: One could conjecture that they thought that was when I should be coming back to Nashville.
Jonathan: So, off the record (although I'm happy for you to research all of my claims):
Jonathan: I was coming up for tenure in the fall of 2002. At that time I did not have tenure.
Jonathan: So when the chairman of Vanderbilt's math department told me on the morning of Friday, November 22, 2002 in the hallway (2 days after the publication of my essay), that the complaints
Jonathan: by neo-Confederates that were coming to him he would not show me
Jonathan: and he would not ignore, but he would forward them to the dean;
Jonathan: moreover, they would be put in my file and treated like student complaints (even though these people had nothing to do with the university), that
Jonathan: was a threat against my job.
Jonathan: In my opinion, it was also a mistake Vanderbilt made that helped me.
Jonathan: When I wrote the general counsel, David Williams, Vanderbilt issued many letters stating that this would not affect my tenure.
Jonathan: The math department vote was positive.
Jonathan: But when a friend called to say the United Daughters of the Confederacy were planning to subpoena me, my brother told me to get out of there.
Jonathan: I made sure to avoid contact with people. Fortunately, only one person in the Vanderbilt administration knew where I lived, since I had temporary accommodation.
Jonathan: I also was told that to try to avoid a subpoena is against the law, so for several years I could not even reveal to Americans that I was aware of this move: Although in fact, I can truthfully say I do not *know* if I was subpoenaed. I deliberately kept myself
Jonathan: ignorant of the situation so I could honestly say I didn't know. But I was afraid even after the court case finished in 2005 to admit this, lest some neo-Confederate judge try to come after me for *that*, since it was clear to me this was their goal.
Jonathan: To punish Farley.
Jonathan: The judge in the case said I could be supoenaed, however, through Vanderbilt---even though normally someone has to come to you directly to subpeona you.
Jonathan: This seemed illegal, but, to borrow from Nixon/Bush, if judge says it, then it is legal.
Jonathan: Hence I cut off contact links with Vanderbilt. This was in early January 2003.
Jonathan: I changed my address, registration almost immediately, and even my driver's license as soon as possible.
Jonathan: I left a lot of valuable belongings in Nashville storage because to to get them would have risked contact.
Jonathan: (For instance, ironically, Jefferson Davis's autobiography, a new tuxedo, and the gown I graduated from Oxford in, which has sentimental value and also is very expensive.)
Jonathan: They should be in the basement of North Hall at Vanderbilt.
Jonathan: Mark Bandas was the person who knew where I lived.

Jonathan: It was clear I was being singled out because only two people were sought after for subpoenas, someone who had written a history of Vanderbilt (Paul Conklin, I believe) and me.
Jonathan: And I think they only picked Conklin to avoid the accusation of singling me out.
Jonathan: But, on the face of it, I had nothing to do with the court case, so this was pure political revenge for my having written the essay about a Klan statue having nothing to do with the case and nothing to do with Vanderbilt or my job.
Jonathan: In Boston, I noticed some $5,000 had been deposited into my bank account at the end of January 2003.
Jonathan: Now, my paycheck was never automatically deposited: this was the first time it had happened.
Jonathan: So I sent the money back via a bank certified check. It came back to me and this continued several rounds.
Jonathan: In other words, I was willing to forgo this mysterious money because I was afraid (a) it was a set up: keeping money sent to you is larceny, or (b) it would be used as evidence that I was a Vanderbilt employee at the end of January 2003, when presumably the subpoena had gone out in the middle of January (after I had left).
Jonathan: The judge claimed that my merely being a Vanderbilt employee meant they could subpoena me through my employer, a dubious legal claim.
Jonathan: I had no intention of setting foot inside a neo-Confederate court, and, moreover, you are not protected from libel in a courtroom. They could also demand through "discovery" all kinds of documents.
Jonathan: For example, maybe they would demand all my email back to 1997, for example, and put it up on the web.
Jonathan: Indeed, the judge who ruled in favor of the neo-Confederates had apparently given talk at the Nashville Battle Preservation Society, which sounds like a dubious name.
Jonathan: If you don't comply---or even if you do, but they say you don't---you can go to jail and pay a fine.
Jonathan: So it was important for me to establish I had nothing to do with Vanderbilt *and* not indicate that I knew anything about the case.
Jonathan: It was worth the tens of thousands of dollars I did lose.
Jonathan: In February 2003, Cambridge, Massachusetts police detained me at MIT on suspicion of being a bank robber.
Jonathan: I did not complain because I did not want the media to start the attack on me (especially student newspapers) again. Indeed, one student who had written a pro-Confederate statement in the Vanderbilt newspaper was a Harvard undergraduate.
Jonathan: J. Alan Dodd, although weirdly he had volunteered for my congressional campaign. (I had never met him.)
Jonathan: Possibly the statement was erroneously attributed to him.
Jonathan: I had my brother read any mail from Vanderbilt.
Jonathan: I did not say, "I quit," because I didn't want another round of newspaper articles. I wanted it to all die down.
Jonathan: But I regarded myself as having left Vanderbilt in early January 2003.
Jonathan: But the tenure process was continuing: it was supposed to end at the latest by late April 2003.
Jonathan: I got a letter from then-provost Nick Zeppos that they had "forgotten" to consider my case at their meeting.
Jonathan: This sounded fishy to me.
Jonathan: It seemed as if they were looking for a reason to deny me tenure and still hadn't found one. They knew they were on shaky ground since
Jonathan: the math chairman had made his statement to me.
Jonathan: They needed to make sure I could not sue them for racial discrimination.

Jonathan: In June 2003, I feared they would deny me tenure, which makes it harder to get a new job, so I wrote Vanderbilt to say that I don't know why they are writing me, I have not been a member of Vanderbilt for some time.
Jonathan: I didn't want to give the exact date.
Jonathan: Within a few days, I got a letter saying I had received tenure.
Jonathan: My feeling is: when they got my letter, they granted me tenure, believing I wouldn't come back.
Jonathan: I couldn't sue them for discrimination if they hadn't discriminated against me.
Jonathan: I didn't read this letter till Thanksgiving 2003.
Jonathan: So I wrote Vanderbilt again saying to ignore my previous letter.
Jonathan: But I still had no intention to go back.
Jonathan: Suing people for libel was not an option since, if you hire a lawyer, than you can be subpoenaed through the lawyer. But contrary to what Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center claimed, I did have several cases, so Vanderbilt's actions
Jonathan: opened them up to a massive suit---unless they knew I wouldn't sue.
Jonathan: They could only have known that if they were in fact working with the very group that was suing Vanderbilt, the United Daughters of the Confederacy.
Jonathan: But because of the suit, I did not mention that I was at Vanderbilt for years, leading some people---like Steffen Lempp at the University of Wisconsin and Miriam Feldblum, assistant to the president at Caltech---to suspect that I had been denied tenure.
Jonathan: My personal feeling is that I probably would have been denied tenure had the Vanderbilt math department chair not made his mistake, and had I not told Vanderbilt I was leaving. But that's just speculation.
Jonathan: In fact, I did receive tenure.
Jonathan: I never did find out if it's safe for me to reveal I knew something about the subpoena (although at this stage I could have read it on-line), but as soon as someone confirms for me that it's safe I'll be happy to go on the record.
Jonathan: Of course, a writer is free to "speculate" why I left Vanderbilt so suddenly in early January 2003.
Jonathan: The first year I was at MIT, I kept my passport literally on my person at all times (except when in the shower), in case federal marshals came after me to enforce a subpoena, and I had to flee to Canada.
Jonathan: As you can see here, the neo-Confederates do try to get people arrested:
Jonathan: http://www2.oanow.com/oan/News/local/article/dowdells_actions_garner_disapproval/69850/
Jonathan: This person very soon afterwards apologized.
Jonathan: http://www2.oanow.com/oan/news/local/article/dowdell_apologizes/71268/